

REMARKS

Claims 1-44, 57-111, and 115-127 are pending in the above-captioned patent application after this amendment. Claims 1-44, 57-110, and 123-127 have been allowed. Claims 111, 115, and 118-122 have been rejected. Claims 112-114, 116, and 117 have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 111, 115-120 have been amended and claims 112-114 have been canceled without prejudice for the purpose of expediting the patent application process in a manner consistent with the goals of the Patent Office pursuant to 65 Fed. Reg. 54603 (September 8, 2000), even though the Applicants believe that the previously pending claims were allowable.

Support for the amendments to the claims can be found throughout the previously pending claims, the drawings and the specification. In particular, support for the amendments to claims 118 and 119 can be found in claim 112 and claims 111, 115-117 and 120 have been amended to depend from claim 123. Accordingly, this amendment is not considered to raise new issues.

No new matter is believed to have been added. Reconsideration of the pending application is respectfully requested in view of the above-recited amendments. Because the amendments are considered to place the application in condition for allowance, the entry of this amendment after final is believed to be appropriate.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1-44, 57-110, and 123-127 are allowed. Claims 112-114, 116, and 117 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 112-114 have been cancelled without prejudice and claims 116 and 117 have been amended to depend upon claim 123 which is allowable.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

Claims 111, 115, 118-122 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Takahashi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,522,388). Claims 111, 115, and 120 have been amended to depend from allowable claim 123. Accordingly, claims 111, 115, and 120 are considered to be in condition for allowance. Further, the applicants submit that amended claim 118, amended claim 119, 121 and 122 are patentable.

The Applicants provide that Takahashi et al. is directed to a vibration eliminator and exposure apparatus 1 comprising a reticle stage RS that supports a reticle R; a column 48 that supports the reticle stage RS and the reticle R; a fundamental base 20 that supports the column 48, with actuators 46A-46D and hard rubbers 47A-47B provided between the fundamental base 20 and the column 48; a rectangular pedestal 10 that supports the fundamental base 20, with voice-coil motors 12A-12D and air mounts 14A-14D provided near each of the four corners of the fundamental base 20 between the pedestal 10 and the fundamental base 20; and a projection optical system PL that passes through the fundamental base 20 and is secured to the fundamental base 20. The vibration eliminator and exposure apparatus further comprise Y actuators 34 and 38 that impart thrust to the fundamental base 20 in the +Y direction and an X actuator 42 that imparts thrust to the fundamental base 20 along the \pm X direction.

However, Takahashi et al. does not disclose first isolation means for securing the stage base means to the base assembly means, the first isolation means including a plurality of flexible support means for attenuating movement of the stage base means relative to the base assembly means thereby reducing the effect of vibration of the base assembly means causing vibration on the stage base means. Further, Takahashi et al. does not disclose securing the stage base to the base assembly with a first isolation system, the first isolation system including a plurality of flexible supports that attenuates movement of the stage base relative to the base assembly thereby reducing the effect of vibration of the base assembly causing vibration on the stage base.

In contrast to Takahashi et al., claim 118 requires "An exposure apparatus that transfers an image onto a substrate by utilizing an optical means, the exposure apparatus being adapted to be mounted to a mounting base, the exposure apparatus comprising: movable means for holding a reticle, the movable means being movable

relative to the optical means; stage base means for supporting the movable means; base assembly means for supporting the stage base means; first isolation means for securing the stage base means to the base assembly means, the first isolation means including a plurality of flexible support means for attenuating movement of the stage base means relative to the base assembly means thereby reducing the effect of vibration of the base assembly means causing vibration on the stage base means; and second isolation means for securing the base assembly means to the mounting base means, the second isolation means including a second passive component means for passively reducing the effect of vibration of the mounting base means causing vibration on the base assembly means.” These features are not disclosed by Takahashi et al. Accordingly, the rejection of amended claim 118 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) in view of Takahashi et al. is not supported by the art and should be withdrawn. Claim 121 depends from claim 118. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 121 is also not supported by the art and should be withdrawn.

Additionally, in contrast to Takahashi et al., claim 119 requires “A device manufacturing method comprising the steps of: providing an optical device; providing a substrate stage that holds a substrate; providing a reticle stage that holds a reticle, the reticle stage being movable relative to the optical device; supporting the reticle stage with a stage base; providing a base assembly; providing a mounting base; securing the stage base to the base assembly with a first isolation system, the first isolation system including a plurality of flexible supports that attenuates movement of the stage base relative to the base assembly thereby reducing the effect of vibration of the base assembly causing vibration on the stage base; securing the base assembly to the mounting base with a second isolation system, the second isolation system including a second passive component for passively reducing the effect of vibration of the mounting base causing vibration on the base assembly; producing a relative movement between the optical device and the reticle; and exposing the substrate that is held by the substrate stage, by the optical device. Accordingly, the rejection of amended claim 119 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) in view of Takahashi et al. is not supported by the art and should be withdrawn. Claim 122 depends from claim 119. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 122 is also not supported by the art and should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Applicants respectfully assert that claims 1-44, 57-111, 115-127 are patentable for the reasons set forth above, and that the application is now in a condition for allowance. Accordingly, an early notice of allowance is respectfully requested. The Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at 858-456-1951 for any reason that would advance the instant application to issue.

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Respectfully submitted,



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